

Citizen-Soldiers: A Tradition of Service

Lieutenant Colonel Thomas W. Beeson, Army National Guard

IN THEIR EARLIEST SERVICE as a militia force at Bunker Hill, Americans first began serving their communities and their country as citizen-soldiers. From those humble beginnings emerged the organization we know today as the National Guard—a citizen-soldier force composed of both Army and Air Force components, capable of serving its country at home or around the globe as an integrated and essential component of our nation's Armed Forces.

Because of this widespread mission of support, legislative affairs within the National Guard have become a complex business. Our basic goal is the same as any other Department of Defense (DOD) legislative liaison (LL) office—to provide an accurate, responsive conduit for the two-way flow of information between Congress and the National Guard and to advise our leadership on matters of congressional importance. The mechanics of how we accomplish our mission are also very similar, but more complex in many ways. For instance, like the National Guard Bureau (NGB), our legislative office is composed of and represents both the Army National Guard (ARNG) and the Air National Guard (ANG) and, consequently, as a part of the total force team, the Active Army and Air Force. As shown in Figure 1, the NGB is involved at many levels.

As an NGB staff element, the NGB Policy and Liaison Office (NGB-PL) interfaces with and represents these same agencies.

Although the NGB-PL has the primary responsibility, congressional relations are by no means limited to this office. The National Guard offices of the chief counsel and public affairs have significant involvement in congressional affairs, as do the NGB staff members serving on the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) Army and Air Force staffs.

NGB-PL also interfaces with the four service legislative offices and with OSD-LL. Add to this already complex set of relations the 54 separate adjutants general—each representing their respective governors and personnel of the National Guard apportioned to their states—and you have some very interesting liaison challenges. While there is often significant discussion about the many additional, value-added roles that the Guard fills at the community level, including disaster relief, at-risk youth programs and counterdrug programs, it is the Guard's federal combat mission—that of enhancing the combat capability of our nation's defense forces—that has primacy and drives our resources and force structure. From an LL perspective, articulating the importance and requirements of the NGB's primary mission in an accurate and timely

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In the past, the struggle over allocating extremely scarce resources, in combination with the realignment and recognition of the Guard's combat roles, missions and capabilities, has generated less than positive relations, particularly within the Active Component (AC). However, tremendous strides have recently been made toward total integration of all Army components.

Currently, the ARNG provides over half of the AC's combat forces, almost half of its combat support capability and about one-third of its combat service support forces. Likewise, the ANG is a fully integrated partner in the Air Force, providing 49 percent of its theater airlift capability, 45 percent of its aerial tanker forces, 34 percent of its fighters and 36 percent of its air rescue resources. Mission allocation is constantly under review and will most certainly change as the services continue to adjust to an ever-changing world and threats to our national security.

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In today's environment of increasing reliance on the Reserve Component as part of the Total Force, it is imperative that we achieve an integrated, balanced, full-spectrum combat capability as we face the national defense challenges ahead. Increasing operations tempo, with integrated operations in the Sinai, Bosnia and Macedonia, are just some examples of the new challenges the National Guard faces. Additionally, emerging missions such as na-

tional missile defense, countering weapons of mass destruction and the increasingly important challenges of homeland defense also present the NGB with unique challenges.

From its earliest citizen-soldier beginnings to its support to ongoing peacekeeping deployments around the world, the National Guard continues to be a community-based military. Because the Guard

is community-based, it is highly visible to our nation's elected officials. All of this translates to issues that frequently achieve a high level of interest among congressional members. The National Guard LL Office's mission is to ensure that questions which emerge as a result of congressional interest are answered in an accurate and timely manner.

Mission accomplishment is achieved by coordinating with the staffs of the ARNG and ANG, as well as the Army, Air Force and DOD departmental staffs. Information requests are generated by the House and Senate committees—both authorization and appropriations—as well as members of Congress. Where applicable, properly staffed information papers are provided to answer the questions. At other times, a briefing may be requested. When this happens, it is the LL's responsibility to notify the appropriate agencies of the requirement, ensure that their proposed briefing answers the question(s) and to establish and provide escort for the briefing itself.

When information papers and briefings do not provide the level of understanding the member or staffer is seeking on a particular topic, a fact-finding trip is occasionally requested. If this happens, it is the LL Office's responsibility to make the necessary arrangements to satisfy the request. Since these trips are taken in relation to the federal mission of the Guard, the funding and primary escort for these trips comes through the respective parent service LL

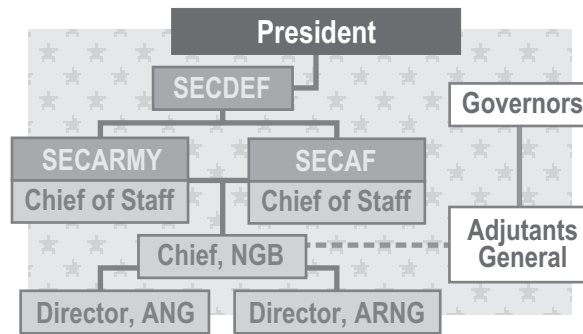


Figure 1. National Guard Bureau Interfaces.

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Office, depending on whether an Army or Air Force issue is to be addressed. The coordination efforts and support we receive through these offices has been outstanding. Cooperation between the Guard and the service LL offices is a mutually beneficial relationship which results in the member or staffer having a greater understanding of each service's needs.

The NGB-PL does not have the necessary manpower or the need to duplicate all of the subordinate branches that are found at the parent service liaison offices. We have three offices that parallel branches found within the service LL offices, as depicted in Figure 2.

In addition to the interaction and liaison conducted between the Pentagon and the Hill, there is also interaction between the services and the private associations that seek to serve the respective services. For the National Guard, those organizations include the National Guard Association of the United States (NGAUS), the Enlisted Association of the National Guard of the United States (EANGUS) and the Reserve Officers' Association (ROA), as well as the service associations and the 54 state guard associations.

Finally, LL discussion would be incomplete without mentioning the coordination that is conducted with the Congressional Caucuses. The Senate's National Guard Caucus is co-chaired by Senator Christopher (Kit) Bond (R-Missouri) and Senator

Richard Bryan (D-Nevada). The House of Representatives has a parallel caucus co-chaired by Representative Steve Buyer (R-Indiana) and Representative Gene Taylor (D-Mississippi). These

caucuses and their members attempt to ensure that important National Guard issues receive the appropriate level of congressional attention. Both of these caucuses and their members are valued friends of the Guard and the DOD community and are regarded with the highest level of respect.

Congressional liaison activities within the NGB are challenging and complex, while simultaneously stimulating and rewarding. Balancing the Guard's needs within the respective services' needs and DOD is often a delicate task that frequently requires the skill and timing of a tight-rope walker but is nonetheless critical to the Guard and DOD. By informing and educating Congress within the context of our role in DOD, we ensure that Congress is aware of the many missions we perform and the requirements necessary to continue to provide for those missions. We owe it to DOD, the services and to the nearly 500,000 Guard members we support to assure that we maintain the two-way channel of communication between the leadership of the NGB and Congress, and to ensure that we are properly prepared to fight and win those battles to which we will inevitably be called. **MR**

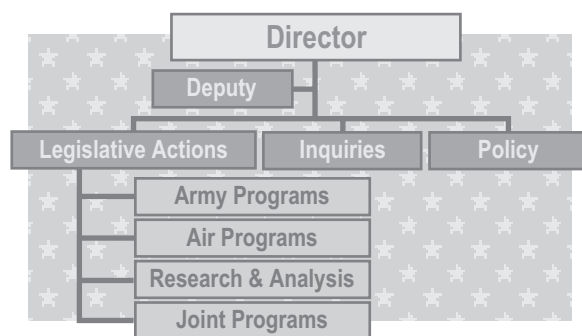


Figure 2. NGB Branches Parallel Service Liaison Offices.

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